

WORLDVIEWS

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<http://www.amorenaturalway.com/uploads/newsletter/25/pamphlet-2-worldviews.pdf>

A worldview is a philosophy of life. A worldview is not a paradigm; a worldview is deeper than a paradigm. Paradigms come from core beliefs that make up a worldview. Everyone has a worldview that is mostly unconscious. The holistic worldview of the ancients changed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the philosophical and scientific revolution that changed radically the way people looked at themselves and their relationship with the world. The idea of an organic, living, and spiritual universe was replaced by that of the world as a machine, and the machine became the primary metaphor of the modern era.

Who led this radical transformation in worldview? Galileo Galilei, Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, and Isaac Newton were the leaders of this new worldview. The Newtonian universe was a mechanical system put in motion by God and operated by exact mathematical laws. This universe was deterministic: If the scientist knew the laws and the initial conditions of the system, the scientist could predict accurately what the system would do and where it would go.

The universe of the scientific revolution was a vast, cold, clockwork machine. Its mathematical and mechanical laws governed every movement and aspect of matter including people, plants, and animals. God created the material particles, the forces between them, and the laws of motion. After that, the machine ran on its own—purposeless, meaningless, and soulless. In the scientific view, God disappeared eventually—replaced by mathematics.

The earth was no longer the nurturing mother of the ancients. She was dead, and the atoms that made up matter were inert, independent, predictable, and predetermined. Humans could detach themselves from the workings of the universe and observe and gain knowledge of its workings. The five senses no longer mattered and ethics, spirit, values, quality, and consciousness were marginalized. The only things real in this universe were the quantifiable, and the knowledge of science was certain and absolute. People used scientific knowledge to carry out the purpose of science and to dominate and control nature. This was an emotionless world of rule books and impermeable boundaries—a black and white world—an either/or world with human beings—the pinnacle of evolution—dominating the natural world.

This science was different from that found in other cultures (then or now) and fit perfectly with the beginning of industrialization which had the following underlying beliefs: -It's us against the environment. -It's us against other men. -It's the individual (or the individual

community, or the individual nation) that matters. -We can have unilateral control over the environment and must strive for that control. -We live within an infinitely expanding "frontier." -Economic determinism is common sense. -Technology will do it for us.

The industrial revolution began in approximately 1750 in England and continued unencumbered until the mid-twentieth century when the transition to a new era began. Why was there an industrial revolution? Perhaps it was the discovery of the Americas, and the natural resources they provided. Possibly it was the deep systemic shifts and changes in thought itself, almost imperceptible, begun with the start of the agricultural revolution. Maybe it was the growth of cities begun in the agricultural revolution. Perhaps it was the invention of the steam engine or the new scientific worldview. No single variable caused the industrial revolution. Alvin Toffler wrote, "There are only interrelated variables, boundless in complexity."

Whatever the causes of the industrial revolution, congruence existed between the scientific and philosophical beliefs of the scientific revolution and the industrial revolution.

Metaphors of the mechanistic worldview provided justification for the exploitation of nature that materialism, industrialization, and unchecked appetite and greed demanded.

With the industrial revolution came jobs, machines, factories, and what Morris Berman described as the "modal personality of our time—a personality that is docile and subdued in the face of authority but fiercely aggressive toward competitors and subordinates." The modal personality is familiar to anyone who has worked in an organization—the mindless, oblivious, and obedient bureaucrats and technicians who do what they are told and refuse to think for themselves. The machine became the principle agent of change, and factories and workers adapted themselves to the efficient working of mechanical things. Creativity and "aliveness" were exchanged for routine and control. This change was traumatic for people who saw their traditional life destroyed by the creation of jobs in factories.

People designed organizations and leadership models from this science and we live with the results daily. We know the impact the mechanistic worldview has had on human beings in organizations. We have felt the alienation of being treated like a machine, although we don't talk about it—machines don't have feelings. In a world where corporations are machines, where management is equated with control, where employees are children, where people are motivated by fear, where change is synonymous with pain, and where emotions are forbidden, many people are bored, afraid, confused, alienated, and angry. Many experience those emotions as "numbness."

But the science has changed dramatically. Physics originated the mechanistic worldview and eclipsed it some three-hundred years later. The ecological worldview (foreshadowed by the organic worldview of indigenous peoples) began to emerge with the discoveries of quantum theory early in this century followed by the learnings from the study of living

systems. I call this worldview ecological because ecology focuses on life itself and the relationships that connect all living things and ecology is a rich source of metaphors and models. The ecological worldview is striking in its similarity to the organic worldview of the ancients. Science is discovering what nonmoderns have known for thousands of years.

If we are going to model organizations after science, we need to understand the new learnings that have been emerging for much of this century from the discoveries of quantum physics and from the learnings from the study of living systems. A new worldview is evolving— an ecological or organic worldview.

In what ways might the learnings from quantum physics and the study of living systems change how we relate to the living world? Think of the following as points on a continuum rather than dualistic opposites.

-From a view of the universe as dead and mechanical to alive and dynamic—our world (and organizations and people) is a dynamic place where something is always happening. Change is constant as activities and events, visible and invisible, interact to create constantly the creative flow of life. -From separate parts to interconnected wholes—Reality is not composed of discrete building blocks but rather webs of relationships that are interrelated and interdependent. -From objective to subjective—The observer cannot be separated from the observed. -From control, prediction, and certainty to influence, probability, and uncertainty—Influence replaces control and creativity increases. People influence dynamics by their choices, by what they pay attention to, and by the connections they make. Most connections between cause and effect are impossible to trace. People can visualize scenarios and can predict short-term probabilities of connections and approximations, but the long-term future is essentially unpredictable. -From unaware to mindful—A life of constant change filled with synchronicity and surprise requires people to slow down, step back, and pay attention so they can take advantages of life's opportunities. -From events and outcomes to process and patterns—The world is chaotic, complex, and insubstantial. Seeing process and pattern is more important than doing events and achieving outcomes. People understand eventually that everything is process, and the process becomes the task. -From either/or to both/and—Most of the world is not black and white. The opposites of either/or thinking are aspects of a more basic and larger unity. People manage the paradox of conflicting realities until they transcend the limits of their own thought, and see the greater whole.

Life is at the center of the ecological worldview, and people's values impact directly their interaction with nature, and their perception of the patterns of life. Core beliefs become: -It's us in cooperation with the environment. -It's us in cooperation with other people (competition will survive but in a larger cooperative context). -It's the authentic woman or man in relationship with the whole (family, organization, nation) that matters. -People act in relationship with the environment and strive for understanding. -Growth

is limited. -Sustainability is what is important. -Economic determinism is not common sense. -Technology cannot do everything for us.

The universe of the emerging worldview is an alive and undivided whole created as one entity with its elements interconnected, interrelated, and interdependent. All betterment flows from the totality as the diverse parts interact and organize together in patterns that balance and sustain the essence of the whole. The potential for change is unlimited and uncommitted. This is a universe of spirit, purpose, meaning, and mystery.

The earth is once again the nurturing mother of the ancients. Humans are a presence in nature just as all other species of plants and animals are. People are part of the unbroken whole—not separate, detached, and superior. Meaning flows naturally from people’s connection with everything else in the universe. This is an alive, creative, and emotional world of choices—a world of gray—a both/and world where little is certain.

This world was never so self-evident as the day I sat in a small skiff in the Baja of California bobbing in light waves. I watched as a 40 foot long and 40-ton great gray whale surfaced slowly beneath the boat and gently introduced her new child to the boat’s elated occupants. I peered into the large, serene eye of the mother and wondered what her world was like? Her gentle and knowing return of my excited stare linked us in a mystical moment. I realized that in one slight movement she could destroy the boat and kill its occupants. Instead, she chose to form a relationship with us. Mother and child floated with the boat for a few minutes. They allowed the exhilarated humans to touch them and to lean over and kiss the barnacle covered parent before mother and child submerged slowly and disappeared. For a few short moments the sky, the ocean, the people, the bobbing skiff, and the whale and her child were one.

An ecological worldview does not eliminate failure, suffering, and death. On the African plain, death is as common and natural as life. Indigenous people had an organic worldview. Their lives were not easy or glamorous, but they probably lived more creatively than people do today. Events that human beings define as "bad" happened to the ancients, and they happen to people today. We know this. No one understands why. This is the mystery of life. Scientific discoveries have not changed the dynamics of life. Instead, a more encompassing worldview will provide a greater understanding of life’s processes. People can use this understanding to take advantage of some of the dynamics and better comprehend and thereby accept others.